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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: COPENHAGEN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE,
TAIWAN'S LOCAL ELECTIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 8 on the aftermath of the December 5 city mayors' and county magistrates' elections around the island, its impact on cross-Straits relations; and on the upcoming fourth round of talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait, which will be held in Taichung.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the upcoming climate change conference to be held in Copenhagen and said the success of greenhouse emissions cuts all depends on the United States' sincerity. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" urged the state leaders assembled in Copenhagen to "set realistic goals that address the issues that can be tackled." With regard to Taiwan's December 5 local elections, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" continued to lambast what it believes to be President Ma Ying-jeou's China-tilting policy and said the election results showed that Ma's policy line and his administration's abilities have been totally rejected by the Taiwan people. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, urged the DPP to "rebrand the party as one that is more middle-of-the-road" so as to be able to stage a comeback in the 2012 presidential election. End summary.

¶3. Copenhagen Climate Change Conference

A) "It All Depends on the United States' Sincerity Whether the [Goal of] Reduction in Emissions [of Greenhouse Gases] Will Succeed"

The "International Lookout" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] wrote (12/8):

"U.S. President Barack Obama has altered his schedule for attending the Copenhagen [climate] summit; in addition to the opening ceremony, he will also be there at the end. It is generally believed that [Obama's move] indicated that the United States is sincere and serious about the conference after all. But if the United States is unwilling to make some sacrifices or contributions, the international accord to cut emissions of greenhouse gases will be [futile]. ...

"According to the 'Kyoto Protocol,' developed countries and developing countries shoulder different responsibilities in terms of cutting greenhouse emissions. As a result, developed countries are obliged to implement the reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases, while there is no such obligation on the part of the developing countries. Initially, the United States did not even want to sign the 'Kyoto Protocol,' then it decided to bring down its emissions reduction target. Yet, just prior to the Copenhagen summit, Washington emphasized that developing countries should join the bandwagon of [countries committing to] binding greenhouse gas emission cuts, and it threatened to impose carbon tariffs. [Washington's] harbored evil intentions are as clear as the day.

..."

B) "Warming or Not, We Must End Global Oil Economy"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/8):

"Later this month, leaders from all across the globe are scheduled to converge on the Danish capital of Copenhagen for a conference on climate change that may end in a new treaty to replace the 1997 Kyoto accord. Of course, the effectiveness of this latest attempt at getting the world to set aside its differences in order to present a common front against climate change will be debated, especially considering that the Kyoto Treaty was never ratified by one of the planet's most active first-world carbon emitters: the United States. ... As the world's leaders begin a second round of climate talks, it would behoove those who question the science behind global warming to understand that the world's current energy policy is unsustainable. This means that the proposed carbon reduction goals will help drive the world toward new sources of energy -- a good thing for all. The assembled international presidents and prime ministers must attempt to set realistic goals that address the issues that can be talked, and new sources of energy should be at the top of the to-do list."

14. Taiwan's Local Elections

A) "Do [Taiwan] People Have to Endure the Disaster Caused by Ma's Grossly Erroneous China-Tilting Policy?"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] editorialized (12/8):

"On December 5, the Taiwan voters taught a serious lesson to Ma Ying-jeou, who has taken over the helm for twenty months now. A majority of the Taiwan people and the international media have all seen very clearly the message delivered by the voters -- namely, President Ma has suffered the severest setback since he stepped into politics, and his policy line and administration's abilities have been totally rejected by the Taiwan people ... Anyone can tell that there are two main reasons behind the defeat of the Ma administration. One is [Taiwan's] stagnant economic situation, as shown in the island's historically high unemployment rates and the fact that people [in Taiwan] can hardly survive and complaints can be heard everywhere. The second is [the Ma administration's] tilting toward China, to an extent that it is unilaterally pushing Taiwan's businesses, capital, talents and technology to China and thereby allowing China to control Taiwan's economy without having to shed any blood. These two reasons appear to be the cause and effect to each other, and the vicious circle just goes on and on. But the key still lies in [Ma's] erroneous China policy. In other words, Ma's line of ultimate unification is the fault zone that will possibly trigger a major earthquake, which will eventually destroy Taiwan's one-hundred-year foundation. ... "

B) "Tsai Soars, But Image Needs a Tweak"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/8):

"... Though some interpreted Saturday's elections as a 'mid-term' exam for Ma and a gauge of the DPP's chances in the legislative and presidential elections in 2012, the results are not, on their own, sufficiently positive to represent a shift in the fortunes of the green camp. ... In a way, if we look at Saturday's elections as a referendum on the KMT in general and Ma in particular, we could argue that the party passed, while Ma came close to flunking. This shows us that voters are capable of distinguishing one from the other and that Ma's misfortunes will not inevitably drag the KMT down. As more than two years separate us from the critical elections, the KMT will have sufficient time to rebuild its image and perhaps rid itself of members who risk undermining its chances of remaining in power. This could even mean nixing a Ma candidacy.

"Still, the DPP has been handed an opportunity to regain momentum and to rebuild itself after years of decline. A main component to that effort will be rebranding the party as one that is more

middle-of-the-road than that which, in the public eye, had grown increasingly nationalistic and exclusionary during former president Chen Shui-bian's second term. This, above all, will require efforts to convince the public, investors, the business sector and the international community that it is not anti-business or, as some media continue to characterize the DPP, 'anti China.' What it must make its detractors realize is that despite its pro-independence platform, the DPP does not advocate policies that pretend that China does not exist, nor does it seek to fuel animosities in the Taiwan Strait. It is possible to be pro-independence and to seek closer, friendlier relations with Beijing, which, for the most part, is what the DPP tried to achieve while in office. The perception of the DPP as a 'radical' and 'anti-China' party may be unfair, the result of a smear campaign by Beijing, the KMT and pan-blue media, but as long as that image endures, the DPP's chances of winning enough people to its side -- and this means light-blues -- to stage a comeback in 2012 will be slim. ..."

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